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THE

SCHOLAR IN A REPUBLIC.

WENDELL PHILLIPS.

THE SCHOLAR IN A REPUBLIC

ADDRESS

AT THE

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

PHI BETA KAPPA

OF

HARVARD COLLEGE

JUNE 30, 1881

BY

WENDELL PHILLIPS

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"Though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet, if he had not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man as any yeoman competently wise in his mother dialect only." — MILTON.

"I cannot but think as Aristotle (lib. 6) did of Thales and Anaxagoras, that they may be learned but not wise, or wise but not prudent, when they are ignorant of such things as are profitable to them. For suppose they know the wonders of nature and the subtleties of metaphysics and operations mathematical, yet they cannot be prudent who spend themselves wholly upon unprofitable and ineffective contemplation." — JEREMY TAYLOR.

"The people, sir, are not always right."
"The people, Mr. Grey, are not often wrong."
DISRAELI'S "*Vivian Grey.*"

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THE

SCHOLAR IN A REPUBLIC.

Mr. President and Brothers of the P. B. K.

A HUNDRED years ago our society was planted — a slip from the older root — in Virginia. The parent seed, tradition says, was French, — part of that conspiracy for free speech whose leaders prated democracy in the *salons*, while they carefully held on to the flesh-pots of society by crouching low to kings and their mistresses, and whose final object of assault was Christianity itself. Voltaire gave the watchword, —

"Crush the wretch."
"*Écrasez l'infame.*"

No matter how much or how little truth there may be in the tradition: no matter what was the origin or what was the object of our society; if it had any special one, both are long since forgotten. We stand now simply a representative of free, brave, American scholarship. I emphasize *American* scholarship.

In one of those glowing, and as yet unequalled pictures which Everett drew for us, here and elsewhere, of Revolutionary scenes, I remember his saying, that the independence we then won, if taken in its literal and narrow sense, was of no interest and little value; but, construed in the fulness of its real meaning, it bound us to a distinctive American character and purpose, to a keen sense of large responsibility, and to a

generous self-devotion. It is under the shadow of such unquestioned authority that I use the term "American scholarship."

Our society was, no doubt, to some extent, a protest against the sombre theology of New England, where, a hundred years ago, the atmosphere was black with sermons, and where religious speculation beat uselessly against the narrowest limits.

The first generation of Puritans — though Lowell does let Cromwell call them "a small colony of pinched fanatics" — included some men, indeed not a few, worthy to walk close to Roger Williams and Sir Harry Vane, the two men deepest in thought and bravest in speech of all who spoke English in their day, and equal to any in practical statesmanship. Sir Harry Vane — in my judgment the noblest human being who ever walked the streets of yonder city — I do not forget Franklin or Sam Adams, Washington or Fayette, Garrison or John Brown. But Vane dwells an arrow's flight above them all, and his touch consecrated the continent to measureless toleration of opinion and entire equality of rights. We are told we can find in Plato "all the intellectual life of Europe for two thousand years:" so you can find in Vane the pure gold of two hundred and fifty years of American civilization, with no particle of its dross. Plato would have welcomed him to the Academy, and Fénelon kneeled with him at the altar. He made Somers and John Marshall possible; like Carnot, he organized victory; and Milton pales before him in the stainlessness of his record. He stands among English statesmen pre-eminently the representative, in practice and in theory, of serene faith in the safety of trusting truth wholly to her own defence. For other men we walk backward, and throw over their memories the mantle of charity and excuse, saying rev-

erently, "Remember the temptation and the age." But Vane's ermine has no stain; no act of his needs explanation or apology; and in thought he stands abreast of the age, — like pure intellect, belongs to all time.

Carlyle said, in years when his words were worth heeding, "Young men, close your Byron and open your Goethe." If my counsel had weight in these halls, I should say, "Young men, close your John Winthrop and Washington, your Jefferson and Webster, and open Sir Harry Vane." It was the generation that knew Vane who gave to our Alma Mater for a seal the simple pledge, — *Veritas.*

But the narrowness and poverty of colonial life soon starved out this element. Harvard was re-dedicated *Christo et Ecclesiæ;* and, up to the middle of the last century, free thought in religion meant Charles Chauncy and the Brattle-street Church protest, while free thought hardly existed anywhere else. But a single generation changed all this. A hundred years ago there were pulpits that led the popular movement; while outside of religion and of what called itself literature, industry and a jealous sense of personal freedom obeyed, in their rapid growth, the law of their natures. English common sense and those municipal institutions born of the common law, and which had saved and sheltered it, grew inevitably too large for the eggshell of English dependence, and allowed it to drop off as naturally as the chick does when she is ready. There was no change of law, — nothing that could properly be called revolution, — only noiseless growth, the seed bursting into flower, infancy becoming manhood. It was life, in its omnipotence, rending whatever dead matter confined it. So have I seen the tiny weeds of a luxuriant Italian spring upheave the colossal foundations of the Cæsars' palace, and leave it a mass of ruins.

But when the veil was withdrawn, what stood revealed astonished the world. It showed the undreamt power, the serene strength, of simple manhood, free from the burden and restraint of absurd institutions in church and state. The grandeur of this new Western constellation gave courage to Europe, resulting in the French Revolution, the greatest, the most unmixed, the most unstained and wholly perfect blessing Europe has had in modern times, unless we may possibly except the Reformation.

What precise effect that giant wave had when it struck our shore we can only guess. History is, for the most part, an idle amusement, the day-dream of pedants and triflers. The details of events, the actors' motives, and their relation to each other, are buried with them. How impossible to learn the exact truth of what took place yesterday under your next neighbor's roof! Yet we complacently argue and speculate about matters a thousand miles off, and a thousand years ago, as if we knew them. When I was a scholar here, my favorite study was history. The world and affairs have shown me that one-half of history is loose conjecture, and much of the rest is the writer's opinion.[1] But most men see facts, not with their eyes, but with their prejudices. Any one familiar with courts will testify how rare it is for an honest man to give a perfectly correct account of a transaction. We are tempted to see facts as we think they ought to be, or wish they were. And yet journals are the favorite original sources of history. Tremble, my good friend, if your sixpenny neighbor keeps a journal. "It adds a new terror to death." You shall go down to your children not in your fair lineaments and proportions, but with the smirks, elbows, and angles

[1] "Read me any thing but history, for history must be false." — Sir Robert Walpole.

he sees you with. Journals are excellent to record the depth of the last snow and the date when the Mayflower opens; but when you come to men's motives and characters, journals are the magnets that get near the chronometer of history and make all its records worthless. You can count on the fingers of your two hands all the robust minds that ever kept journals. Only milksops and fribbles indulge in that amusement, except now and then a respectable mediocrity. One such journal nightmares New-England annals, emptied into history by respectable middle-aged gentlemen, who fancy that narrowness and spleen, like poor wine, mellow into truth when they get to be a century old. But you might as well cite "The Daily Advertiser" of 1850 as authority on one of Garrison's actions.

And, after all, of what value are these minutiæ? Whether Luther's zeal was partly kindled by lack of gain from the sale of indulgences, whether Boston rebels were half smugglers and half patriots, what matters it now? Enough that he meant to wrench the gag from Europe's lips, and that they were content to suffer keenly, that we might have an untrammelled career. We can only hope to discover the great currents and massive forces which have shaped our lives: all else is trying to solve a problem of whose elements we know nothing. As the poet historian of the last generation says so plaintively, "History comes like a beggarly gleaner in the field, after Death, the great lord of the domain, has gathered the harvest, and lodged it in his garner, which no man may open."

But we may safely infer that French debate and experience broadened and encouraged our fathers. To that we undoubtedly owe, in some degree, the theoretical perfection, ingrafted on English practical sense and old forms, which marks the foundation of our republic.

English civil life, up to that time, grew largely out of custom, rested almost wholly on precedent. For our model there was no authority in the record, no precedent on the file; unless you find it, perhaps, partially, in that Long Parliament bill with which Sir Harry Vane would have outgeneralled Cromwell, if the shameless soldier had not crushed it with his muskets.

Standing on Saxon foundations, and inspired, perhaps, in some degree, by Latin example, we have done what no race, no nation, no age, had before dared even to try. We have founded a republic on the unlimited suffrage of the millions. We have actually worked out the problem that man, as God created him, may be trusted with self-government. We have shown the world that a church without a bishop, and a state without a king, is an actual, real, every-day possibility. Look back over the history of the race: where will you find a chapter that precedes us in that achievement? Greece had her republics, but they were the republics of a few freemen and subjects and many slaves; and "the battle of Marathon was fought by slaves, unchained from the doorposts of their masters' houses." Italy had her republics: they were the republics of wealth and skill and family, limited and aristocratic. The Swiss republics were groups of cousins. Holland had her republic, — a republic of guilds and landholders, trusting the helm of state to property and education. And all these, which, at their best, held but a million or two within their narrow limits, have gone down in the ocean of time.

A hundred years ago our fathers announced this sublime, and, as it seemed then, foolhardy declaration, that God intended all men to be free and equal, — all men, without restriction, without qualification, without limit. A hundred years have rolled away since that

venturous declaration; and to-day, with a territory that joins ocean to ocean, with fifty millions of people, with two wars behind her, with the grand achievement of having grappled with the fearful disease that threatened her central life, and broken four millions of fetters, the great republic, stronger than ever, launches into the second century of her existence. The history of the world has no such chapter in its breadth, its depth, its significance, or its bearing on future history.

What Wycliffe did for religion, Jefferson and Sam Adams did for the State, — they trusted it to the people. He gave the masses the Bible, the right to think. Jefferson and Sam Adams gave them the ballot, the right to rule. His intrepid advance contemplated theirs as its natural, inevitable result. Their serene faith completed the gift which the Anglo-Saxon race makes to humanity. We have not only established a new measure of the possibilities of the race: we have laid on strength, wisdom, and skill a new responsibility. Grant that each man's relations to God and his neighbor are exclusively his own concern, and that he is entitled to all the aid that will make him the best judge of these relations; that the people are the source of all power, and their measureless capacity the lever of all progress, civil, intellectual, and moral; their sense of right the court of final appeal; the institutions they create the only ones any power has a right to impose; that the attempt of one class to prescribe the law, the religion, the morals, or the trade of another is both unjust and harmful, — and the Wycliffe and Jefferson of history mean this if they mean any thing, — then, when, in 1867, Parliament doubled the English franchise, Robert Lowe was right in affirming, amid the cheers of the House, "Now the first interest and duty of every Englishman is to educate the masses." Then, whoever sees farther

than his neighbor is that neighbor's servant to lift him to such higher level. Then, power, ability, influence, character, virtue, are only trusts with which to serve our time.

We all agree in the duty of scholars to help those less favored in life, and that this duty of scholars to educate the mass is still more imperative in a republic, since a republic trusts the state wholly to the intelligence and moral sense of the people. The experience of the last forty years shows every man that law has no atom of strength, either in Boston or New Orleans, unless, and only so far as, public opinion indorses it, and that your life, goods, and good name rest wholly on the moral sense, self-respect, and law-abiding mood of the men that walk the streets, and not a whit on the provisions of the statute-book. Come, any one of you, outside of the ranks of popular men, and you will not fail to find it so. Easy men dream that we live under a government of law. Absurd mistake! we live under a government of men and newspapers. Your first attempt to stem dominant and keenly-cherished opinions will reveal this to you.

But what is education? Of course it is not book-learning. Book-learning does not make five per cent of that mass of common sense that "runs" the world, transacts its business, secures its progress, trebles its power over nature, works out in the long run a rough average justice, wears away the world's restraints, and lifts off its burdens. The ideal Yankee, who "has more brains in his hand than others have in their skulls," is not a scholar; and two-thirds of the inventions that enable France to double the world's sunshine, and make Old and New England the workshops of the world, did not come from colleges or from minds trained in the schools of science, but struggled up, forcing their way

against giant obstacles, from the irrepressible instinct of untrained natural power. Her workshops, not her colleges, made England, for a while, the mistress of the world; and the hardest job her workman had was to make Oxford willing he should work his wonders.

So of moral gains. As shrewd an observer as Governor Marcy of New York often said he cared nothing for the whole press of the seaboard, representing wealth and education (he meant book-learning), if it set itself against the instincts of the people. Lord Brougham, in a remarkable comment on the life of Romilly, enlarges on the fact that the great reformer of the penal law found all the legislative and all the judicial power of England, its colleges and its bar, marshalled against him, and owed his success, *as all such reforms do*, says his lordship, to mass-meetings and popular instinct. It would be no exaggeration to say that government itself began in usurpation, in the feudalism of the soldier and the bigotry of the priest; that liberty and civilization are only fragments of rights wrung from the strong hands of wealth and book-learning. Almost all the great truths relating to society were not the result of scholarly meditation, "hiving up wisdom with each curious year," but have been first heard in the solemn protests of martyred patriotism and the loud cries of crushed and starving labor. When common sense and the common people have stereotyped a principle into a statute, then book-men come to explain how it was discovered and on what ground it rests. The world makes history, and scholars write it, one half truly, and the other half as their prejudices blur and distort it.

New England learned more of the principles of toleration from a lyceum committee doubting the dicta of editors and bishops when they forbade it to put

Theodore Parker on its platform; more from a debate whether the anti-slavery cause should be so far countenanced as to invite one of its advocates to lecture; from Sumner and Emerson, George William Curtis, and Edwin Whipple, refusing to speak unless a negro could buy his way into their halls as freely as any other, — New England has learned more from these lessons than she has or could have done from all the treatises on free printing from Milton and Roger Williams, through Locke, down to Stuart Mill.

Selden, the profoundest scholar of his day, affirmed, "No man is wiser for his learning;" and that was only an echo of the Saxon proverb, "No fool is a perfect fool until he learns Latin." Bancroft says of our fathers, that "the wildest theories of the human reason were reduced to practice by a community so humble that no statesman condescended to notice it, and a legislation without precedent was produced off-hand by the instincts of the people." And Wordsworth testifies, that, while German schools might well blush for their subserviency, —

> "A few strong instincts and a few plain rules,
> Among the herdsmen of the Alps, have wrought
> More for mankind at this unhappy day
> Than all the pride of intellect and thought."

Wycliffe was, no doubt, a learned man. But the learning of his day would have burned him, had it dared, as it did burn his dead body afterwards. Luther and Melanchthon were scholars, but were repudiated by the scholarship of their time, which followed Erasmus, trying "all his life to tread on eggs without breaking them;" who proclaimed that "peaceful error was better than tempestuous truth."

Hence I do not think the greatest things have been

done for the world by its book-men. Education is not the chips of arithmetic and grammar, — nouns, verbs, and the multiplication table; neither is it that last year's almanac of dates, or series of lies agreed upon, which we so often mistake for history. Education is not Greek and Latin and the air-pump. Still, I rate at its full value the training we get in these walls. Though what we actually carry away is little enough, we do get some training of our powers, as the gymnast or the fencer does of his muscles: we go hence also with such general knowledge of what mankind has agreed to consider proved and settled, that we know where to reach for the weapon when we need it.

I have often thought the motto prefixed to his college library catalogue by the father of the late Professor Peirce, — Professor Peirce, the largest natural genius, the man of the deepest reach and firmest grasp and widest sympathy, that God has given to Harvard in our day, — whose presence made you the loftiest peak and farthest outpost of more than mere scientific thought, — the magnet who, with his twin Agassiz, made Harvard for forty years the intellectual Mecca of forty States, — his father's catalogue bore for a motto, "*Scire ubi aliquid invenias magna pars eruditionis est;*" and that always seemed to me to gauge very nearly all we acquired at college, except facility in the use of our powers. Our influence in the community does not really spring from superior attainments, but from this thorough training of faculties, and more even, perhaps, from the deference men accord to us.

Gibbon says we have two educations, one from teachers, and the other we give ourselves. This last is the real and only education of the masses, — one gotten from life, from affairs, from earning one's bread; necessity, the mother of invention; responsibility, that

teaches prudence, and inspires respect for right. Mark the critic out of office: how reckless in assertion, how careless of consequences; and then the caution, forethought, and fair play of the same man charged with administration. See that young, thoughtless wife suddenly widowed; how wary and skilful! what ingenuity in guarding her child and saving his rights! Any one who studied Europe forty or fifty years ago could not but have marked the level of talk there, far below that of our masses. It was of crops and rents, markets and marriages, scandal and fun. Watch men here, and how often you listen to the keenest discussions of right and wrong, this leader's honesty, that party's justice, the fairness of this law, the impolicy of that measure, lofty, broad topics, training morals, widening views. Niebuhr said of Italy, sixty years ago, "No one feels himself a citizen. Not only are the people destitute of hope, but they have not even wishes touching the world's affairs; and hence all the springs of great and noble thoughts are choked up."

In this sense the Fremont campaign of 1856 taught Americans more than a hundred colleges; and John Brown's pulpit at Harper's Ferry was equal to any ten thousand ordinary chairs. God lifted a million of hearts to his gibbet, as the Roman cross lifted a world to itself in that divine sacrifice of two thousand years ago. As much as statesmanship had taught in our previous eighty years, that one week of intellectual watching and weighing and dividing truth taught twenty millions of people. Yet how little, brothers, can we claim for book-men in that uprising and growth of 1856! And while the first of American scholars could hardly find, in the rich vocabulary of Saxon scorn, words enough to express, amid the plaudits of his class, his loathing and contempt for John Brown, Europe thrilled to him as

proof that our institutions had not lost all their native and distinctive life. She had grown tired of our parrot note and cold moonlight reflection of older civilizations. Lansdowne and Brougham could confess to Sumner that they had never read a page of their contemporary, Daniel Webster; and you spoke to vacant eyes when you named Prescott, fifty years ago, to average Europeans; while Vienna asked, with careless indifference, "Seward, who is he?" But long before our ranks marched up State Street to the John Brown song, the banks of the Seine and of the Danube hailed the new life which had given us another and nobler Washington. Lowell foresaw him when forty years ago he sang of, —

> "Truth forever on the scaffold,
> Wrong forever on the throne;
> Yet that scaffold sways the future:
> And behind the dim unknown
> Standeth God, within the shadow,
> Keeping watch above his own."

And yet the book-men, as a class, have not yet acknowledged him.

It is here that letters betray their lack of distinctive American character. Fifty million of men God gives us to mould; burning questions, keen debate, great interests trying to vindicate their right to be, sad wrongs brought to the bar of public judgment, — these are the people's schools. Timid scholarship either shrinks from sharing in these agitations, or denounces them as vulgar and dangerous interference by incompetent hands with matters above them. A chronic distrust of the people pervades the book-educated class of the North; they shrink from that free speech which is God's normal school for educating men, throwing upon them the grave responsibility of deciding great ques-

tions, and so lifting them to a higher level of intellectual and moral life. Trust the people — the wise and the ignorant, the good and the bad — with the gravest questions, and in the end you educate the race; while you secure, not perfect institutions, not necessarily good ones, but the best institutions possible while human nature is the basis and the only material to build with. Men are educated and the state uplifted by allowing all — every one — to broach all their mistakes and advocate all their errors. The community that will not protect its humblest, most ignorant, and most hated member in the free utterance of his opinions, no matter how false or hateful, is only a gang of slaves!

Anacharsis went into the Archon's court at Athens, heard a case argued by the great men of that city, and saw the vote by five hundred men. Walking in the streets, some one asked him, "What do you think of Athenian liberty?" "I think," said he, "wise men argue cases, and fools decide them." Just what that timid scholar, two thousand years ago, said in the streets of Athens, that which calls itself scholarship here says to-day of popular agitation, — that it lets wise men argue questions and fools decide them. But that Athens where fools decided the gravest questions of policy and of right and wrong, where property you had gathered wearily to-day might be wrung from you by the caprice of the mob to-morrow, — that very Athens probably secured the greatest amount of human happiness and nobleness of its era; invented art, and sounded for us the depths of philosophy. God lent to it the largest intellects, and it flashes to-day the torch that gilds yet the mountain peaks of the Old World: while Egypt, the hunker conservative of antiquity, where nobody dared to differ from the priest or to be wiser than his grandfather; where men pretended to

be alive, though swaddled in the grave-clothes of creed and custom as close as their mummies were in linen, — that Egypt is hid in the tomb it inhabited, and the intellect Athens has trained for us digs to-day those ashes to find out what buried and forgotten hunkerism knew and did.

I knew a signal instance of this disease of scholar's distrust, and the cure was as remarkable. In boyhood and early life I was honored with the friendship of Lathrop Motley. He grew up in the thin air of Boston provincialism, and pined on such weak diet. I remember sitting with him once in the State House when he was a member of our Legislature. With biting words and a keen crayon he sketched the ludicrous points in the minds and persons of his fellow members, and, tearing up the pictures, said scornfully, "What can become of a country with such fellows as these making its laws? No safe investments; your good name lied away any hour, and little worth keeping if it were not." In vain I combated the folly. He went to Europe, — spent four or five years. I met him the day he landed, on his return. As if our laughing talk in the State House had that moment ended, he took my hand with the sudden exclamation, "You were all right: I was all wrong! It *is* a country worth dying for; better still, worth living and working for, to make it all it can be!" Europe made him one of the most American of all Americans. Some five years later, when he sounded that bugle-note in his letter to "The London Times," some critics who knew his early mood, but not its change, suspected there might be a taint of ambition in what they thought so sudden a conversion. I could testify that the mood was five years old: years before the slightest shadow of political expectation had dusked the clear mirror of his scholar life.

This distrust shows itself in the growing dislike of universal suffrage, and the efforts to destroy it made of late by all our easy classes. The white South hates universal suffrage; the so-called cultivated North distrusts it. Journal and college, social-science convention and the pulpit, discuss the propriety of restraining it. Timid scholars tell their dread of it. Carlyle, that bundle of sour prejudices, flouts universal suffrage with a blasphemy that almost equals its ignorance. See his words: "Democracy will prevail when men believe the vote of Judas as good as that of Jesus Christ." No democracy ever claimed that the vote of ignorance and crime was as good in any sense as that of wisdom and virtue. It only asserts that crime and ignorance have the same right to vote that virtue has. Only by allowing that right, and so appealing to their sense of justice, and throwing upon them the burden of their full responsibility, can we hope ever to raise crime and ignorance to the level of self-respect. The right to choose your governor rests on precisely the same foundation as the right to choose your religion; and no more arrogant or ignorant arraignment of all that is noble in the civil and religious Europe of the last five hundred years ever came from the triple crown on the Seven Hills than this sneer of the bigot Scotsman. Protestantism holds up its hands in holy horror, and tells us that the Pope scoops out the brains of his churchmen, saying, "I'll think for you: you need only obey." But the danger is, you meet such popes far away from the Seven Hills; and it is sometimes difficult at first to recognize them, for they do not by any means always wear the triple crown.

Evarts and his committee, appointed to inquire why the New-York City government is a failure, were not wise enough, or did not dare, to point out the real

cause, the tyranny of that tool of the demagogue, the corner grog-shop; but they advised taking away the ballot from the poor citizen. But this provision would not reach the evil. Corruption does not so much rot the masses: it poisons Congress. Credit-Mobilier and money rings are not housed under thatched roofs: they flaunt at the Capitol. As usual in chemistry, the scum floats uppermost. The railway king disdained canvassing for voters: "It is cheaper," he said, "to buy legislatures."

It is not the masses who have most disgraced our political annals. I have seen many mobs between the seaboard and the Mississippi. I never saw or heard of any but well-dressed mobs, assembled and countenanced, if not always led in person, by respectability and what called itself education. That unrivalled scholar, the first and greatest New England ever lent to Congress, signalled his advent by quoting the original Greek of the New Testament in support of slavery, and offering to shoulder his musket in its defence; and forty years later the last professor who went to quicken and lift the moral mood of those halls is found advising a plain, blunt, honest witness to forge and lie, that this scholarly reputation might be saved from wreck. Singular comment on Landor's sneer, that there is a spice of the scoundrel in most of our literary men. But no exacting level of property qualification for a vote would have saved those stains. In those cases Judas did not come from the unlearned class.

Grown gray over history, Macaulay prophesied twenty years ago that soon in these States the poor, worse than another inroad of Goths and Vandals, would begin a general plunder of the rich. It is enough to say that our national funds sell as well in Europe as English consols; and the universal-suffrage Union can borrow money as cheaply as great Britain, ruled, one half by

Tories, and the other half by men not certain that they dare call themselves Whigs. Some men affected to scoff at democracy as no sound basis for national debt, doubting the payment of ours. Europe not only wonders at its rapid payment, but the only taint of fraud that touches even the hem of our garment is the fraud of the capitalist cunningly adding to its burdens, and increasing unfairly the value of his bonds; not the first hint from the people of repudiating an iota even of its unjust additions.

Yet the poor and the unlearned class is the one they propose to punish by disfranchisement.

No wonder the humbler class looks on the whole scene with alarm. They see their dearest right in peril. When the easy class conspires to steal, what wonder the humbler class draws together to defend itself? True, universal suffrage is a terrible power; and, with all the great cities brought into subjection to the dangerous classes by grog, and Congress sitting to register the decrees of capital, both sides may well dread the next move. Experience proves that popular governments are the best protectors of life and property. But suppose they were not, Bancroft allows that "the fears of one class are no measure of the rights of another."

Suppose that universal suffrage endangered peace and threatened property. There is something more valuable than wealth, there is something more sacred than peace. As Humboldt says, "The finest fruit earth holds up to its Maker is a man." To ripen, lift, and educate a man is the first duty. Trade, law, learning, science, and religion are only the scaffolding wherewith to build a man. Despotism looks down into the poor man's cradle, and knows it can crush resistance and curb ill-will. Democracy sees the ballot in that baby-hand; and selfishness bids her put integrity on one side of those baby

footsteps and intelligence on the other, lest her own hearth be in peril. Thank God for his method of taking bonds of wealth and culture to share all their blessings with the humblest soul he gives to their keeping! The American should cherish as serene a faith as his fathers had. Instead of seeking a coward safety by battening down the hatches and putting men back into chains, he should recognize that God places him in this peril that he may work out a noble security by concentrating all moral forces to lift this weak, rotting, and dangerous mass into sunlight and health. The fathers touched their highest level when, with stout-hearted and serene faith, they trusted God that it was safe to leave men with all the rights he gave them. Let us be worthy of their blood, and save this sheet-anchor of the race, — universal suffrage, — God's church, God's school, God's method of gently binding men into commonwealths in order that they may at last melt into brothers.

I urge on college-bred men, that, as a class, they fail in republican duty when they allow others to lead in the agitation of the great social questions which stir and educate the age. Agitation is an old word with a new meaning. Sir Robert Peel, the first English leader who felt himself its tool, defined it to be "marshalling the conscience of a nation to mould its laws." Its means are reason and argument, — no appeal to arms. Wait patiently for the growth of public opinion. That secured, then every step taken is taken forever. An abuse once removed never re-appears in history. The freer a nation becomes, the more utterly democratic in its form, the more need of this outside agitation. Parties and sects laden with the burden of securing their own success cannot afford to risk new ideas. "Predominant opinions," said Disraeli, "are the opinions of a

class that is vanishing." The agitator must stand outside of organizations, with no bread to earn, no candidate to elect, no party to save, no object but truth, — to tear a question open and riddle it with light.

In all modern constitutional governments, agitation is the only peaceful method of progress. Wilberforce and Clarkson, Rowland Hill and Romilly, Cobden and John Bright, Garrison and O'Connell, have been the master spirits in this new form of crusade. Rarely in this country have scholarly men joined, as a class, in these great popular schools, in these social movements which make the great interests of society "crash and jostle against each other like frigates in a storm."

It is not so much that the people need us, or will feel any lack from our absence. They can do without us. By sovereign and superabundant strength they can crush their way through all obstacles.

> "They will march prospering, — not through our presence;
> Songs will inspirit them, — not from our lyre;
> Deeds will be done — while we boast our acquiescence;
> Still bidding crouch whom the rest bid aspire."

The misfortune is, we lose a God-given opportunity of making the change an unmixed good, or with the slightest possible share of evil, and are recreant beside to a special duty. These "agitations" are the opportunities and the means God offers us to refine the taste, mould the character, lift the purpose, and educate the moral sense of the masses, on whose intelligence and self-respect rests the state. God furnishes these texts. He gathers for us this audience, and only asks of our coward lips to preach the sermons.

There have been four or five of these great opportunities. The crusade against slavery — that grand hypocrisy which poisoned the national life of two

generations — was one, — that conflict between two civilizations which threatened to rend the Union. Almost every element among us was stirred to take a part in the battle. Every great issue, civil and moral, was involved, — toleration of opinion, limits of authority, relation of citizen to law, place of the Bible, sphere of woman, question of race, priest, and layman, state rights and nationality; and Channing testified that free speech and free printing owed their preservation to the struggle. But the pulpit flung the Bible at the reformer; law visited him with its penalties; society spewed him out of its mouth; bishops expurgated the pictures of their Common Prayer books; and editors omitted pages in republishing English history; Pierpont emasculated his Class-book; Bancroft remodelled his chapters; and Everett carried Washington through thirty States, remembering to forget the brave words the wise Virginian had left on record warning his countrymen of this evil. Amid this battle of the giants, scholarship sat dumb for thirty years until imminent deadly peril convulsed it into action, and colleges, in their despair, gave to the army that help they had refused to the marketplace and the rostrum.

There was here and there an exception. That earthquake scholar at Concord, whose serene word, like a whisper among the avalanches, topples down superstitions and prejudices, was at his post, and, with half a score of others, made the exception that proved the rule. Pulpits, just so far as they could not boast of culture, and nestled closest down among the masses, were infinitely braver than the "spires and antique towers" of stately collegiate institutions.

Then came reform of penal legislation, — the effort to make law mean justice, and substitute for its bar-

barism Christianity and civilization. In Massachusetts Rantoul represents Beccaria and Livingston, Mackintosh and Romilly. I doubt if he ever had one word of encouragement from Massachusetts letters; and, with a single exception, I have never seen, till within a dozen years, one that could be called a scholar active in moving the Legislature to reform its code.

"The London Times" proclaimed, twenty years ago, that intemperance produced more idleness, crime, disease, want, and misery, than all other causes put together; and "The Westminster Review" calls it a "curse that far eclipses every other calamity under which we suffer." De Quincey says, "The most remarkable instance of a combined movement in society which history, perhaps, will be summoned to notice, is that which, in our day, has applied itself to the abatement of intemperance. Two vast movements are hurrying into action by velocities continually accelerated, — the great revolutionary movement from *political* causes concurring with the great *physical* movement in locomotion and social intercourse from the gigantic power of steam. At the opening of such a crisis, had no *third movement arisen of resistance to intemperate habits*, there would have been ground of despondency as to the melioration of the human race." These are English testimonies, where the state rests more than half on bayonets. Here we are trying to rest the ballot-box on a drunken people. "We can rule a great city," said Sir Robert Peel, "America cannot;" and he cited the mobs of New York as sufficient evidence of his assertion.

Thoughtful men see that up to this hour the government of great cities has been with us a failure; that worse than the dry-rot of legislative corruption, than the rancor of party spirit, than Southern barbarism,

than even the tyranny of incorporated wealth, is the giant burden of intemperance, making universal suffrage a failure and a curse in every great city. Scholars who play statesmen,[1] and editors who masquerade as scholars, can waste much excellent anxiety that clerks shall get no office until they know the exact date of Cæsar's assassination, as well as the latitude of Pekin, and the rule of three. But while this great crusade has been, for sixty years, gathering its facts and marshalling its arguments, rallying parties, besieging legislatures and putting great States on the witness-stand as evidence of the soundness of its methods, scholars have given it nothing but a sneer. But if universal suffrage ever fails here for a time, — permanently it cannot fail, — it will not be incapable civil service, nor an ambitious soldier, nor Southern vandals, nor venal legislatures, nor the greed of wealth, nor boy statesmen rotten before they are ripe, that will put universal suffrage into eclipse: it will be rum intrenched in great cities and commanding every vantage ground.

Social science affirms that woman's place in society marks the level of civilization. From its twilight in Greece, through the Italian worship of the Virgin, the dreams of chivalry, the justice of the civil law, and the equality of French society, we trace her gradual recognition; while our common law, as Lord Brougham confessed, was, with relation to women, the opprobrium of the age and of Christianity. For forty years, plain men and women, working noiselessly, have washed away

[1] For George William Curtis, the leader of the civil-service reform, I have the most sincere respect. His place as statesman, scholar, and reformer is such, and so universally recognized, that praise from me would be almost impertinence. But a large proportion of the party in New York, and a still larger proportion of its adherents in Massachusetts, justify all I have said of it and them.

that opprobrium; the statute-books of thirty States have been remodelled, and woman stands to-day almost face to face with her last claim, — the ballot. It has been a weary and thankless, though successful, struggle. But if there be any refuge from that ghastly curse, the vice of great cities, — before which social science stands palsied and dumb, — it is in this more equal recognition of woman. If, in this critical battle for universal suffrage, — our fathers' noblest legacy to us, and the greatest trust God leaves in our hands, — there be any weapon, which, once taken from the armory, will make victory certain, it will be, as it has been in art, literature, and society, summoning woman into the political arena.

But, at any rate, up to this point, putting suffrage aside, there can be no difference of opinion: every thing born of Christianity, or allied to Grecian culture or Saxon law, must rejoice in the gain. The literary class, until half a dozen years, has taken note of this great uprising only to fling every obstacle in its way. The first glimpse we get of Saxon blood in history is that line of Tacitus in his "Germany," which reads, "In all grave matters they consult their women." Years hence, when robust Saxon sense has flung away Jewish superstition and Eastern prejudice, and put under its foot fastidious scholarship and squeamish fashion, some second Tacitus, from the valley of the Mississippi, will answer to him of the Seven Hills, "In all grave questions we consult our women."

I used to think that then we could say to letters as Henry of Navarre wrote to the Sir Philip Sidney of his realm, Crillon, "the bravest of the brave," "We have conquered at Arques, *et tu n'y étais pas, Crillon*," — "You were not there, my Crillon." But a second thought reminds me that what claims to be literature

has been always present in that battle-field, and always in the ranks of the foe.

Ireland is another touchstone which reveals to us how absurdly we masquerade in democratic trappings while we have gone to seed in tory distrust of the people; false to every duty, which, as eldest-born of democratic institutions, we owe to the oppressed, and careless of the lesson every such movement may be made in keeping public thought clear, keen, and fresh as to principles which are the essence of our civilization, the groundwork of all education in republics.

Sydney Smith said, "The moment Ireland is mentioned the English seem to bid adieu to common sense, and to act with the barbarity of tyrants and the fatuity of idiots;" and Byron called England's union with Ireland "the union of the shark with his prey." Bentham's conclusion, from a survey of five hundred years of European history, was, "Only by making the ruling few uneasy can the oppressed many obtain a particle of relief." Edmund Burke — Burke, the noblest figure in the Parliamentary history of the last hundred years, greater than Cicero in the senate and almost Plato in the academy — Burke affirmed, a century ago, "Ireland has learnt at last that justice is to be had from England, only when demanded at the sword's point." And a century later, only last year, Gladstone himself proclaimed in a public address in Scotland, "England never concedes any thing to Ireland except when moved to do so by fear."

When we remember these admissions, we ought to clap our hands at every fresh Irish "outrage," as a parrot-press styles it; aware that it is only a far-off echo of the musket-shots that rattled against the Old State House on the 5th of March, 1770, and of the war-whoop that made the tiny spire of the Old South trem-

ble when Boston rioters emptied the three India tea-ships into the sea, — welcome evidence of living force and rare intelligence in the victim, and a sign that the day of deliverance draws each hour nearer. Cease ringing endless changes of eulogy on the men who made North's Boston port-bill a failure while every leading journal sends daily over the water wishes for the success of Gladstone's copy of the bill for Ireland. If all rightful government rests on consent, — if, as the French say, you "can do almost any thing with a bayonet except sit on it," — be at least consistent, and denounce the man who covers Ireland with regiments to hold up a despotism, which, within twenty months, he has confessed rests wholly upon fear.

Then note the scorn and disgust with which we gather up our garments about us and disown the Sam Adams and William Prescott, the George Washington and John Brown, of St. Petersburg, the spiritual descendants, the living representatives, of those who make our history worth any thing in the world's annals, — the Nihilists.

Nihilism is the righteous and honorable resistance of a people crushed under an iron rule. Nihilism is evidence of life. When "order reigns in Warsaw," it is spiritual death. Nihilism is the last weapon of victims choked and manacled beyond all other resistance. It is crushed humanity's only means of making the oppressor tremble. God means that unjust power shall be insecure; and every move of the giant, prostrate in chains, whether it be to lift a single dagger or stir a city's revolt, is a lesson in justice. One might well tremble for the future of the race if such a despotism could exist without provoking the bloodiest resistance. I honor Nihilism; since it redeems human nature from the suspicion of being utterly vile, made up only of

heartless oppressors and contented slaves. Every line in our history, every interest of civilization, bids us rejoice when the tyrant grows pale and the slave rebellious. We cannot but pity the suffering of any human being, however richly deserved; but such pity must not confuse our moral sense. Humanity gains. Chatham rejoiced when our fathers rebelled. For every single reason they alleged, Russia counts a hundred, each one ten times bitterer than any Hancock or Adams could give. Sam Johnson's standing toast in Oxford port was, "Success to the first insurrection of slaves in Jamaica," a sentiment Southey echoed. "Eschew cant," said that old moralist. But of all the cants that are canted in this canting world, though the cant of piety may be the worst, the cant of Americans bewailing Russian Nihilism is the most disgusting.

I know what reform needs, and all it needs, in a land where discussion is free, the press untrammelled, and where public halls protect debate. There, as Emerson says, "What the tender and poetic youth dreams to-day, and conjures up with inarticulate speech, is to-morrow the vociferated result of public opinion, and the day after is the charter of nations." Lieber said, in 1870, "Bismarck proclaims to-day in the Diet the very principles for which we were hunted and exiled fifty years ago." Submit to risk your daily bread, expect social ostracism, count on a mob now and then, "be in earnest, don't equivocate, don't excuse, don't retreat a single inch," and you will finally be heard. No matter how long and weary the waiting, at last, —

"Ever the truth comes uppermost,
And ever is justice done."

"For Humanity sweeps onward:
Where to-day the martyr stands,
On the morrow crouches Judas
With the silver in his hands;

× It was Lawrence Stone
first employed

Far in front the cross stands ready,
And the crackling fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday
In silent awe return
To glean up the scattered ashes
Into History's golden urn."

In such a land he is doubly and trebly guilty, who, except in some most extreme case, disturbs the sober rule of law and order.

But such is not Russia. In Russia there is no press, no debate, no explanation of what government does, no remonstrance allowed, no agitation of public issues. Dead silence, like that which reigns at the summit of Mont Blanc, freezes the whole empire, long ago described as "a despotism tempered by assassination." Meanwhile, such despotism has unsettled the brains of the ruling race, as unbridled power doubtless made some of the twelve Cæsars insane: a madman, sporting with the lives and comfort of a hundred million of men. The young girl whispers in her mother's ear, under a ceiled roof, her pity for a brother knouted and dragged half dead into exile for his opinions. The next week she is stripped naked, and flogged to death in the public square. No inquiry, no explanation, no trial, no protest, one dead uniform silence, the law of the tyrant. Where is there ground for any hope of peaceful change? Where the fulcrum upon which you can plant any possible lever?

Macchiavelli's sorry picture of poor human nature would be fulsome flattery if men could keep still under such oppression. No, no! in such a land dynamite and the dagger are the necessary and proper substitutes for Faneuil Hall and "The Daily Advertiser." Any thing that will make the madman quake in his bedchamber, and rouse his victims into reckless and desperate resist-

ance. This is the only view an American, the child of 1620 and 1776, can take of Nihilism. Any other unsettles and perplexes the ethics of our civilization.

Born within sight of Bunker Hill, in a commonwealth which adopts the motto of Algernon Sidney, *sub libertate quietem* ("accept no peace without liberty"), — son of Harvard, whose first pledge was "Truth," citizen of a republic based on the claim that no government is rightful unless resting on the consent of the people, and which assumes to lead in asserting the rights of humanity, — I at least can say nothing else and nothing less — no, not if every tile on Cambridge roofs were a devil hooting my words!

I shall bow to any rebuke from those who hold Christianity to command entire non-resistance. But criticism from any other quarter is only that nauseous hypocrisy, which, stung by threepenny tea-tax, piles Bunker Hill with granite and statues, prating all the time of patriotism and broadswords, while, like another Pecksniff, it recommends a century of dumb submission and entire non-resistance to the Russians, who, for a hundred years, have seen their sons by thousands dragged to death or exile, no one knows which, in this worse than Venetian mystery of police, and their maidens flogged to death in the market-place, and who share the same fate if they presume to ask the reason why.

"It is unfortunate," says Jefferson, "that the efforts of mankind to secure the freedom of which they have been deprived should be accompanied with violence and even with crime. But while we weep over the means, we must pray for the end." Pray fearlessly for such ends: there is no risk! "Men are all tories by nature," says Arnold, "when tolerably well off: only monstrous injustice and atrocious cruelty can rouse them." Some talk of the rashness of the uneducated classes. Alas!

ignorance is far oftener obstinate than rash. Against one French Revolution — the scarecrow of the ages — weigh Asia, "carved in stone," and a thousand years of Europe, with her half-dozen nations meted out and trodden down to be the dull and contented footstools of priests and kings. The customs of a thousand years ago are the sheet-anchor of the passing generation, so deeply buried, so fixed, that the most violent efforts of the maddest fanatic can drag it but a hand's-breadth.

Before the war Americans were like the crowd in that terrible hall of Eblis which Beckford painted for us, — each man with his hand pressed on the incurable sore in his bosom, and pledged not to speak of it: compared with other lands, we were intellectually and morally a nation of cowards.

When I first entered the Roman States, a custom-house official seized all my French books. In vain I held up to him a treatise by Fénelon, and explained that it was by a Catholic archbishop of Cambray. Gruffly he answered, "It makes no difference: *it is French.*" As I surrendered the volume to his remorseless grasp, I could not but honor the nation which had made its revolutionary purpose so definite that despotism feared its very language. I only wished that injustice and despotism everywhere might one day have as good cause to hate and to fear every thing American.

At last that disgraceful seal of slave complicity is broken. Let us inaugurate a new departure, recognize that we are afloat on the current of Niagara, — eternal vigilance the condition of our safety, — that we are irrevocably pledged to the world not to go back to bolts and bar, — could not if we would, and would not if we could. Never again be ours the fastidious scholarship that shrinks from rude contact with the

masses. Very pleasant it is to sit high up in the world's theatre and criticise the ungraceful struggles of the gladiators, shrug one's shoulders at the actors' harsh cries, and let every one know that but for "this villanous saltpetre you would yourself have been a soldier." But Bacon says, "In the theatre of man's life, God and his angels only should be lookers-on." "Sin is not taken out of man as Eve was out of Adam, by putting him to sleep." "Very beautiful," says Richter, "is the eagle when he floats with outstretched wings aloft in the clear blue; but sublime when he plunges down through the tempest to his eyry on the cliff, where his unfledged young ones dwell and are starving." Accept proudly the analysis of Fisher Ames: "A monarchy is a man-of-war, stanch, iron-ribbed, and resistless when under full sail; yet a single hidden rock sends her to the bottom. Our republic is a raft, hard to steer, and your feet always wet; but nothing can sink her." If the Alps, piled in cold and silence, be the emblem of despotism, we joyfully take the ever-restless ocean for ours, — only pure because never still.

Journalism must have more self-respect. Now it praises good and bad men so indiscriminately that a good word from nine-tenths of our journals is worthless. In burying our Aaron Burrs, both political parties — in order to get the credit of magnanimity — exhaust the vocabulary of eulogy so thoroughly that there is nothing left with which to distinguish our John Jays. The love of a good name in life and a fair reputation to survive us — that strong bond to well-doing — is lost where every career, however stained, is covered with the same fulsome flattery, and where what men say in the streets is the exact opposite of what they say to each other. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* most

men translate, "Speak only good of the dead." I prefer to construe it, "Of the dead say nothing unless you can tell something good." And if the sin and the recreancy have been marked and far-reaching in their evil, even the charity of silence is not permissible.

To be as good as our fathers we must be better. They silenced their fears and subdued their prejudices, inaugurating free speech and equality with no precedent on the file. Europe shouted "Madmen!" and gave us forty years for the shipwreck. With serene faith they persevered. Let us rise to their level. Crush appetite and prohibit temptation if it rots great cities. Intrench labor in sufficient bulwarks against that wealth, which, without the tenfold strength of modern incorporation, wrecked the Grecian and Roman States; and, with a sterner effort still, summon women into civil life as re-enforcement to our laboring ranks in the effort to make our civilization a success.

Sit not, like the figure on our silver coin, looking ever backward.

"New occasions teach new duties;
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward,
Who would keep abreast of Truth.
Lo! before us gleam her camp-fires!
We ourselves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly
Through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal
With the Past's blood-rusted key."